

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY BIB:WROBERTS:REVTSED WHITE HOUSE TEXT

APPROVED BY EUR:AAHARTMAN

NSC: CGRANGER

C:JMONTGOMERY

S/S - MR. ORTIZ

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P 102223Z MAR 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 058405

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, XH, SOPN

SUBJECT: RFE TRANSMITTING FACILITIES: VISIT OF DAVID
ABSHIRE

1. DAVID ABSHIRE, CHAIRMAN, BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL
BROADCASTING, WOULD LIKE TO CALL ON FOREIGN SECRETARY
CALLAGHAN ON MARCH 22 OR 23 AND WOULD APPRECIATE
EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING APPOINTMENT.

2. WHILE IN LONDON IN CONNECTION WITH THE CHIEFS OF
MISSION MEETING LAST DECEMBER, ABSHIRE AND ROBERTS RAISED
WITH ASST. UNDERSECRETARY RONALD SCRIVENER QUESTION OF
U.S. POSSIBLY UPGRADING THE OUTMODED BBC PLANT IN SKELTON
IN RETURN FOR RFE/RL SHARING OF FACILITIES WITH BBC. AT
LATER MEETING (JANUARY 14) WITH AMBASSADOR RAMSBOTHAM IN
WASHINGTON ABSHIRE AND ROBERTS TOOK A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT
TACK ASKING WHETHER HMG WOULD ALLOW RFE/RL TO INSTALL
TRANSMITTERS AND ANTENNAS ON BRITISH SOIL FOR RELAY
PURPOSES. A BASE OF THIS TYPE WOULD EMPLOY BRITISH WORKERS,
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PAY RENT FOR LAND, COVER POWER COSTS, USE ITS OWN SHORTWAVE

FREQUENCIES, AND, IN ADDITION, WOULD BE WILLING TO OFFER AIRTIME TO BBC. (THE QUESTION OF PURCHASING BRITISH-MADE TRANSMITTERS MIGHT EVEN BE EXPLORED).

3. BOARD MEMBER JOHN ROCHE, WHO IS A PERSONAL FRIEND OF CALLAGHAN, ROY JENKINS AND DENNIS HEALY, WROTE A LETTER TO ALL THREE URGING THEM TO GIVE SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION TO BIB REQUEST.

4. BIB HAS INTER-AGENCY CLEARANCE TO EXPLORE DIRECTLY WITH UK THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING ALTERNATIVE TRANSMISSION FACILITIES IN UK, AND EMBASSY SHOULD PROVIDE ABSHIRE ALL APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE. ABSHIRE HAS REQUESTED THAT AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANY HIM IN CALL ON FOREIGN SECRETARY, AND DEPARTMENT BELIEVES IT WOULD BE HELPFUL AND ADVISABLE FOR AMBASSADOR OR DCM TO DO SO.

5. ROBERTS, WHO WILL ACCOMPANY ABSHIRE TO MADRID AND LONDON, WILL OVERNIGHT IN LONDON ON WAY TO MADRID MARCH 15 AND WILL BE AVAILABLE TO BRIEF EMBASSY MORNING OF MARCH 16.

6. FYI: RADIO FREE EUROPE AND RADIO LIBERTY, PREVIOUSLY COVERTLY FUNDED, HAVE BEEN UNDER OVERSIGHT OF A PRESIDENTIALLY APPOINTED GOVERNMENTAL BOARD SINCE 1974. THE RADIOS HAVE SIGNIFICANT CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT AND ARE PERCEIVED AS FURTHERING THE CAUSE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION.

7. BIB ACT (P.L. 93-129, 93RD CONGRESS, S. 1914, OCTOBER 19, 1973) STATES: QUOTE 1) THAT IT IS THE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES TO PROMOTE THE RIGHT OF FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, INCLUDING THE FREEDOM 'TO SEEK, RECEIVE, AND IMPART INFORMATION AND IDEAS THROUGH ANY MEDIA AND REGARDLESS OF FRONTIERS,' IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 19 OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS;

2) THAT OPEN COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION AND IDEAS AMONG THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD CONTRIBUTES TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY, AND THAT THE PROMOTION OF SUCH COMMUNICATIONAL

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CATION IS IN THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES;

3) THAT RADIO FREE EUROPE, INCORPORATED, AND THE RADIO LIBERTY COMMITTEE, INCORPORATED (HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS RADIO FREE EUROPE AND RADIO LIBERTY), HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN FURTHERING THE OPEN COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION AND IDEAS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS;

4) THAT THE CONTINUATION OF RADIO FREE EUROPE AND RADIO LIBERTY AS INDEPENDENT BROADCAST MEDIA, OPERATING IN A MANNER NOT INCONSISTENT WITH THE BROAD FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE UNITED STATES AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIGH

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, IS IN THE NATIONAL INTERESTS; AND

5) THAT IN ORDER TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENTALITY FOR THE CONTINUATION OF ASSISTANCE TO RADIO FREE EUROPE AND RADIO LIBERTY AND TO ENCOURAGE A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOG WITH THE PEOPLES OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS AND EASTERN EUROPE, IT IS DESIRABLE TO ESTABLISH A BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING. UNQUOTE

8. PRESENT BOARD CONSISTS OF ABSHIRE, FORMER ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE AND PRESENT CHAIRMAN OF GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY'S CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES; AMBASSADOR FOY KOHLER, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO THE USSR AND NOW PROFESSOR AT MIAMI UNIVERSITY ; JOHN ROCHE, FORMER SPECIAL COUNSELLOR TO THE PRESIDENT AND NOW HENRY R. LUCE PROFESSOR OF CIVILIZATION AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TUFTS UNIVERSITY; THOMAS H. QUINN, GENERAL PARTNER O'CONNOR AND HANNAN LAW FIRM; AND JOHN T. MURPHY, PRESIDENT, AVCO BROADCASTING CORPORATION. THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BOARD IS WALTER R. ROBERTS, A FORMER SENIOR CAREER OFFICER IN USIA.

9. THE BIB'S FUNCTIONS INCLUDE THE REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THE MISSION AND OPERATION OF RFE/RL AND THE ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY OF THEIR BROADCASTING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE BROAD FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE U.S.
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10. MOST RFE AND RL PROGRAMS ORIGINATE IN MUNICH. THE RADIOS HAVE A NUMBER OF TRANSMITTERS. BUT MOST OF THE TRANSMITTING (I.E., RELAY) FACILITIES ARE NOW LOCATED IN PORTUGAL (RFE) AND SPAIN (RL). THE LEASE ON THE FORMER SITE EXPIRED OVER A YEAR AGO, AND THE LEASE ON THE LATTER IS ABOUT TO EXPIRE. EQUIPMENT IN BOTH BASES IS GENERALLY OLD AND SHOULD BE MODERNIZED. IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER THESE LEASES CAN BE RENEWED -- AT THIS TIME IT APPEARS THE PORTUGUESE LEASE MAY BE RENEWED AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN APRIL/JUNE AND ABSHIRE WILL DISCUSS RENEWAL OF SPANISH LEASE ON MARCH 18 WITH SPANISH FOREIGN MINISTER IN MADRID -- THERE ARE GOOD POLITICAL REASONS WHY BIB MAY WISH TO TURN AWAY FROM IBERIA. END FYI.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TRANSMITTERS, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE058405
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: WROBERTS:REVTSED WHITE HOUSE TEXT
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760091-0308
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760374/aaaacnki.tel
Line Count: 169
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <20 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RFE TRANSMITTING FACILITIES: VISIT OF DAVID ABSHIRE
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, US, XH, BBC, (ABSHIRE, DAVID), (CALLAGHAN, JAMES)
To: LONDON
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006